



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Sasanian hinterland fortresses, linear barriers and frontier landscapes: The 2007 season at the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe

Citation for published version:

Sauer, E, Omrani Rekavadi, H, Wilkinson, T & Abbasi, GA 2008, 'Sasanian hinterland fortresses, linear barriers and frontier landscapes: The 2007 season at the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe', *The British Institute of Persian Studies Newsletter*, no. 33, pp. 1-3.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

The British Institute of Persian Studies Newsletter

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Sauer, E., Omrani Rekavadi, H., Wilkinson, T., & Abbasi, G. A. (2008). Sasanian hinterland fortresses, linear barriers and frontier landscapes: The 2007 season at the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe. The British Institute of Persian Studies Newsletter, (33), 1-3

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



Sasanian hinterland fortresses, linear barriers and frontier landscapes: the 2007 season at the Great Wall of Gorgan and the Wall of Tammishe

by Hamid Omrani, Eberhard Sauer, Tony Wilkinson and Ghorban Ali Abbasi

The joint Iranian and British project on the Linear Barriers of Northern Iran has explored the over 195 km long Gorgan Wall and the over 10 km long Wall of Tammishe for three seasons so far. In 2005 we succeeded in dating both walls to the 5th (or possibly early 6th) c. AD and in 2006 in revealing, via magnetometer survey, the detailed plan of the internal buildings in one of the associated forts (Fort 4).

In 2007 the project focused on establishing the relationship of the Great Wall of Gorgan and compounds in the hinterland south of the Wall, as well as sites north of it and outside its protective bounds. Tony Wilkinson and Hamid Omrani carried out an extensive landscape survey, exploring features traced by satellite images, including canals, cut by the later Gorgan Wall, and the settlements they had once supplied with water. Seth Priestman's detailed study of the pottery from Fort 4, and its comparison with material from sites on either side of the Wall, indicates that most settlements north of the wall had been abandoned well before its construction, while pottery from a c. 650x650m large square compound south of the wall, Qaleh Kharabeh, may date to around the time the Fort 4 was first occupied. An extensive magnetometer survey led to the discovery of numerous regularly aligned rectangular enclosures in the Qaleh's interior. They might have served as drainage ditches around tents. A rich bone and charcoal assemblage from a small mud-brick structure near the central crossroads should allow scientific dating.

Whilst this hinterland fortress seems to have been abandoned early, the deep build-up of occupation layers in fort 4 and a magnetometer survey of fort 16 (revealing four probable brick kilns underneath) demonstrated that the Wall forts were occupied for much longer. Geophysical survey and excavation also took place in one fort near the Tammishe Wall and unearthed the foundations of a pillar and parts of the entrance façade of a large three-aisled hall. A satellite image suggests that the Tammishe Wall runs into terrain now flooded by the Caspian Sea (a conclusion reached independently by Iranian underwater archaeologists before) and that it is associated with a submerged platform, probably for a fort. Julian Jansen Van Rensburg and Hamid Omrani took the lead in further underwater explorations, revealing extensive brick scatters on the sea floor in the Gulf of Gorgan. These are almost certainly the collapsed remains of the Wall of Tammishe and associated installations, built on dry land some one and a half millennia ago and long since submerged in the waters of the world's largest inland sea. One of the largest and most enigmatic defensive systems ever built is beginning to give up some of its secrets.

We are very grateful for the invaluable support of our fieldwork in 2007 by the British Institute of Persian Studies, the AHRC, the ICHTO and Edinburgh University's School of History, Classics and Archaeology.

We are indebted to Dr Seyed Taha Hashemi, the vice-director of ICHTO and to Dr Hassan Fazeli, the director of the ICAR, for their kind permission to carry out our project and for supporting our work in many ways. We would also like to thank Dr Seyed Mehdi Mousavi, Mr Fereidoon Faali, Leyla Safa'ie and Mr Fereydoun Unagh.

Nothing could have been achieved without the immense contribution of the specialists and the team, notably Seth Priestman, Esmail Safari Tamak, Roger Ainslie, Majid Mahmoudi, Nikolaus Galiatsatos, Kourosh Roustai, Julian Jansen Van Rensburg, Mohammad Ershadi, Dr Eve MacDonald,

Dr Morteza Fattahi, Chris Oatley, Bardia Shabani, James Ratcliffe, Lucian Steven Usher-Wilson, Maryam Hussein-Zadeh, Mohaddeseh Mansouri Razi and Atieh Esmaili.

Illustrations

1. The 2007 landscape survey (by Tony Wilkinson, Hamid Omrani and Kourosh Roustai) revealed a scatter of sweet water molluscs on the surface of the massive Sadd-i Garkaz (here with two archaeologists as human scales on its crest): evidence that it was not a dam, but an aqueduct.
2. Deep settlement layers in fort 4 under excavation. Note a late brick paving and a half-sectioned hearth on the right and a road on the left. The protective roof in the background covers trench H, excavated in 2006.
3. Magnetometer survey of the northern part of the Bansaran fort near the Tammishe Wall. Each square measures 30x30m. The two parallel rows of red dots at the top represent high magnetic anomalies, caused by brick pillars of a three-aisled hall (by Abingdon Archaeological Geophysics and the ICHTO).